

The hearings will take place on Tuesday, April 20; Tuesday, April 27, and Tuesday, May 4, 1999. Each hearing will commence at 9:30 a.m. in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the hearings is to receive testimony on S. 25, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999; S. 446, the Resources 2000 Act; S. 532, the Public Land and Recreation Investment Act of 1999; and the Administration's Lands Legacy proposal.

Because of the limited time available for each hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send two copies of their testimony of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, 364 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-6150.

For further information, please contact Kelly Johnson at (202) 224-4971.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet on Thursday, March 18, 1999, at 9:30 a.m., in open session, to receive testimony on the Defense authorization request for fiscal year 2000 and the Future Years Defense Program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, the Finance Committee requests unanimous consent to conduct a hearing on Thursday, March 18, 1999, beginning at 10:00 a.m., in room 215, Dirksen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the sessions of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 1999 and Friday, March 19, 1999. The purpose of these meetings will be to consider S. 326, the Patients' Bill of Rights, and several nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 1999 at 2:30 p.m. to hold a closed hearing on Intelligence Matters.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific

Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 18, 1999 at 10:00 p.m. to hold a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management support of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet at 2:00 on Thursday, March 18, 1999, in open session, to review the readiness of the United States Air Force and Army Operating Forces.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CROP INSURANCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

• Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today as one of the proud cosponsors of S. 629, the Crop Insurance Improvement Act of 1999, sponsored by Senator CRAIG. The issue of crop insurance reform is and will continue to be a primary issue for agriculture this session.

The language offered today brings important changes to crop insurance, especially for specialty crops. This bill drastically improves procedures for determining yields and improves the non-insured crop assistance programs. This bill, S. 629, also improves the safety net to producers through cost of production crop insurance coverage.

This is another important tool to reform the current crop insurance program into a risk management program, which will return more of the economic dollar back to the producer. It is vital to find a solution to provide a way for farmers and ranchers to stay in agriculture. They must ultimately regain the responsibility for risk management the Federal Government withdrew.

To help agricultural producers do that, the Federal Government must fix the current crop insurance program and make it one the producer can use as an effective risk management tool. Eventually, I envision a crop insurance program that puts the control in the hands of agricultural producers. It is the Federal Government's role to facilitate a program to unite the producer and the private insurance company.

It is of utmost importance that we get the producers of this country back on track. Crop insurance reform is one sure way to do that. I urge my colleagues here today to consider the positive effect crop insurance will and must have on the farm economy.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with Senator CRAIG on crop insurance reform. I will have some amendments forthcoming, that I believe will make this bill even more effective. I also plan to introduce a bill this session that I believe will make

even larger strides in the area of crop insurance reform.■

DOMESTIC HUNGER

• Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to briefly talk about the problem of hunger in our nation. I would also like to place into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD two recent front-page articles from the New York Times, written by Andrew Revkin. These articles provide valuable insight into the growing demand for emergency food assistance that food banks around the country have been facing over the last couple of years.

Mr. President, as we approach the beginning of the next century, we have much to be proud of as a nation. The stock market has reached an historic 10,000 mark. We are in the midst of one of the greatest economic expansions in our nation's history. More Americans own their own homes than at any time, and we have the lowest unemployment and welfare caseloads in a generation. Not to mention the fact that for the first time in three decades, there is a surplus in the federal budget.

Yet, there are millions of Americans who go hungry every day. This is morally unacceptable. We must resolve to put an end to the pernicious occurrence of hunger in our nation. Hunger is not a Democrat or Republican issue. Hunger is a problem that all Americans should agree must be ended in our nation.

While it is true that food stamp and welfare program caseloads are dropping, hunger is not. As families try to make the transition from welfare to work, too many are falling out and being left behind. And too often, it is our youth who is feeling the brunt of this, as one out of every five people lining up at soup kitchens is a child.

Second Harvest, the nation's largest hunger relief charity, distributed more than one billion pounds of food to an estimated 26 million low-income Americans last year through their network of regional food banks. These food banks provide food and grocery products to nearly fifty thousand local charitable feeding programs—food shelves, pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

Just as demand is rising at local hunger relief agencies, too many pantries and soup kitchens are being forced to turn needy people away because the request for their services exceeds available food. Today I enter into the record stories detailing some of the problems that these local hunger relief agencies, as chronicled in the New York Times.

Last December, Peter Clavelle, Mayor of Burlington, Vermont, released the U.S. Conference of Mayors Annual Survey of Hunger and Homelessness. The Mayors reported that demand for hunger relief services grew 14 percent last year. Additionally, 21 percent of requests for emergency food are estimated to have gone unmet. This is the highest rate of unmet need by